

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

treatment of their Messiah; their present long-continued banishment from their beautiful land; their sorrows, so heavily pressed on them; their sufferings, so often cruelly unjust; and, applying to the mind's eye the telescope of the prophetic word, note the issue of all this in national regeneration and restoration:—THERE, along that chequered course, is to be seen Jehovah's way, as nowhere else! And the *victory*—where and what is that? In psalms yet lying ahead of us, will it be repeatedly seen; but perhaps nowhere more brightly and suggestively than in the shortest psalm of this priceless psalter, the 117th. One word therein goes straight to the root of this matter of Jehovah's *victory*: it may be a victory over the jealousies and oppressions of Gentile nations, it may be a victory over the beleaguering forces of Antichrist; but it will be, first and last and foremost, a *victory* over the Hebrew nation itself. And when Israel can say to the nations, concerning Yahweh their God, *His kindness hath prevailed over us*, then those who listen to the story will no longer be slow to believe that *His faithfulness is age-abiding*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Did God intend for the nation Israel to be evangelistic—i.e. in telling other nations of their God? How does this psalm relate?
2. Someone referred to this psalm as “the Lord's prayer of the Old Testament”—why would this be appropriate?
3. Rotherham was sure this psalm's promise would be fulfilled—but how and when? Discuss.
4. What is the result of disobedience to the great commission? What was it for Israel? What will it be for us?

## PSALM 68

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Glimpses of Jehovah's Visible Reign over Israel and the Nations.

### ANALYSIS

(See Headlines inserted in text.)

## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

(Lm.) By David—Psalm Song.

(DIVISION I.—THE KING: HIS PROWESS AND PERFECTIONS.)

- 1 God ariseth his foes are scattered,  
yea they who hate him flee from his presence:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 As smoke is driven about are they driven,<sup>2</sup>  
As wax is melted at the presence of fire  
the lawless perish at the presence of God;
- 3 But the righteous are glad they exult in the presence of God,  
and shew their joy with gladness.
- 4 Sing ye to God harp ye his name,  
raise ye (a song)<sup>3</sup> to him that rideth through desert plains:  
in Yah consisteth his name<sup>4</sup> then exult in his presence.
- 5 The father of the fatherless and the advocate of widows  
is God in his holy habitation:—
- 6 God who causeth the lonely to dwell in a home,<sup>5</sup>  
bringeth forth prisoners into prosperity;  
Howbeit the stubborn remain in a sunburnt land.

(DIVISION II.—THE MARCH: FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.)

- 7 O God! when thou didst go forth before thy people,  
when thou didst march through the desert
- 8 Earth quaked yea the heavens dripped  
at the presence of the God of Sinai,  
at the presence of the God of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

(DIVISION III.—THE LAND:

THE HOME OF THE HUMBLED PEOPLE.)

- 9 A copious rain dost thou shed abroad O God on thine  
inheritance,  
when exhausted thou thyself hast restored it:
- 10 Thy living host hath dwelt therein,  
thou dost provide in thy bounty for the humbled one,<sup>7</sup> O God.

(DIVISION IV.—THE CONQUEST:

ENEMIES IN FLIGHT; ABUNDANT SPOIL.)

- 11 The Sovereign Lord giveth the word,<sup>8</sup>  
the herald bands are a mighty host.

1. Cp. Num. 10:35.

2. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

3. "Lift (a song)." "Cast up a highway"—O.G. 699b.

4. So O.G. 88, 7a. Cp. ver. 18.

5. *Gt.*: "who bring back lonely ones home"—Gn.

6. The Sep. has been followed in re-arranging these two clauses.

7. Or: "humiliated one."

8. "Will make the summons resound"—Del.

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- 12 Kings<sup>1</sup> of armies they flee! they flee!  
and she that stayeth<sup>2</sup> at home divideth the spoil.
- 13 When ye rest on the camping ground<sup>3</sup>  
the wings of the dove are covered with silver,  
and her pinions with green-shimmering gold.
- 14 When the Almighty scattereth kings therein  
it snoweth on Zalmon.<sup>4</sup>

(DIVISION V.—THE MOUNTAIN :

UNLIKELY CHOICE; POSSESSION TAKEN.)

- 15 A mountain of might<sup>5</sup> is the mountain of Bashan,  
a mountain of peaks is the mountain of Bashan :—
- 16 Why steal ye envious glances ye mountains ye peaks  
at the mountain which God hath coveted for his seat?  
Surely Jehovah will dwell (there) evermore!
- 17 The chariots of God are in myriads thousands on thousands,<sup>6</sup>  
the Sovereign Lord hath come from Sinai into the  
sanctuary :—<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Thou hast ascended on high hast captured a body of captives,  
hast accepted gifts consisting of men<sup>8</sup> yea even the  
stubborn;<sup>9</sup>  
that thou mayest dwell (there) O Yah Elohim!

(DIVISION VI—THE PEOPLE: WHOSE DAILY BURDEN GOD  
BEARETH, WHOSE SAFETY HE SECURETH, WHOSE LIVES  
HE PRESERVETH, WHOSE BLOOD HE AVENGETH.)

- 19 Blessed be the Sovereign Lord!  
day by day he carrieth a load for us :  
GOD himself is our salvation.

1. Some cod.: "Messengers"—Gn.

2. "The beautiful one," as in Jer. 6:2—Br.

3. Ml.: "between the ash-heaps," *i.e.*, where encampments have been.

Cp. O.G. 1046.

4. So O.G. ("meaning obscure"). "Zalmon"—snow-capped mt.; prob. E. of Jordan—O.G. 854. "The point of the comparison lies either in the booty being abundant as snowflakes and in brilliancy like the dazzling snow, or in the white, pale corpses"—Del.

5. Ml.: "A m. of God."

6. So Kp. and others. "Innumerable, inconceivable thousands"—Del.

7. So *Gt.*—Gn. "The sense is perfectly plain when we resort to the primitive orthography"—G. Intro. 162.

8. Or: "mankind." "Among men"—Del., Per., Dr. and others (as of tribute); but Michaelis, Ewald, Cornill, as in text above; and see Exposition.

9. As in ver. 6, and Deu. 21:18, 20.

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- 20 GOD himself is for us a GOD of saving deeds,<sup>1</sup>  
and to Jehovah Sovereign Lord belong escapes in view of  
death.<sup>2</sup>
- 21 Surely God will shatter the head of his foes,  
the hairy crown that goeth on in his guilty deeds.
- 22 Said Adonai—"From Bashan will I bring back,  
I will bring back from the depths of the sea :
- 23 That thou mayest bathe thy foot in blood,  
the tongue of thy dogs from foes hath its portion."  
(DIVISION VII.—PROCESSION, CONGREGATION, AND  
SONG: ALL NATIONS INVITED TO SING.)
- 24 Men hath seen thy goings O God,  
the goings of my GOD my king into the sanctuary:
- 25 In front are princes<sup>3</sup> behind are harpers,  
in the midst of damsels sounding timbrels:—
- 26 In assemblies bless ye God,  
the Sovereign Lord among the elect<sup>4</sup> of Israel.
- 27 There is Benjamin the Diminutive—ruling them,<sup>5</sup>  
the princes of Judah their throng,<sup>6</sup>  
the princes of Zebulun the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Command O God<sup>7</sup> thy strength,  
the strength O God which thou hast wrought for us.<sup>8</sup>
- 29 Because of thy temple over Jerusalem  
unto thee shall kings bear along a gift.
- 30 Rebuke thou the beast of the reeds,  
the herd<sup>9</sup> of mighty oxen among the calves of the peoples;  
trampling in mire the favoured ones, refined as silver:<sup>10</sup>  
Scatter thou<sup>11</sup> the people who in war take delight.

1. "Deliverances"—Dr.

2. So O.G. 426: ("lit. 'for' that is 'in view of' death,") Cp. esp. Ps. 48:14, and Isa. 26:18.

3. So some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "singers."

4. So it shd. be—Gn.

5. "The conqueror"—Br.

6. "A heap of them"—Br. "Their motley company"—Del.

7. So some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. And so Br. M.T.: "God hath commanded."

8. Cp. Isa. 26:12.

9. U.: "congregation."

10. Line as conjecturally emended by Br.: wit hwhich compare 66:10.

11. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "He hath scattered."

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- 31 There come high messengers<sup>1</sup> out of Egypt,  
the Ethiopian hasteneth his hands unto God.<sup>2</sup>
- 32 Ye kingdoms of the earth! sing ye unto God;  
harp ye tse Sovereign Lord:<sup>3</sup>
- 33 To him who rideth on the ancient heaven of heavens:<sup>4</sup>  
lo! he uttereth his voice a voice of strength.
- 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God,  
over<sup>5</sup> Israel is his majesty,  
and his strength in the skies,<sup>6</sup>
- 35 Fear-inspiring is God out of his sanctuary.<sup>7</sup>  
The GOD of Israel it is who giveth strength and abundant  
might to the people.  
Blessed be God!
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For lilies = passover.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 68

Arise, O God, and scatter all Your enemies! Chase them away!

2 Drive them off like smoke before the wind; melt them like wax in fire! So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But may the godly man exult! May he rejoice and be merry!

4 Sing praises to the Lord! Raise your voice in song to Him who rides upon the clouds!<sup>8</sup> Jehovah is His name—Oh, rejoice in His presence.

5 He is a father to the fatherless; He gives justice to the widows; for He is holy.<sup>9</sup>

6 He gives families to the lonely, and releases prisoners

1. Meaning doubtful.

2. "As for Cush, his hands will run out to God," in the gesture of supplication . . . a prediction of the conversion of Egypt and Ethiopia in accordance with Isa. 19:19 seq., 43:3, 45:14, 60:5 seq., Zp. 3:10." Rather: a pred. that Egypt and Eth. will be represented in the coming kingdom.

3. "Praise ye the Lord with stringed instruments"—Del.

4. Ml.: "on the heavens of the heavens of aforetime (or antiquity)."

5. Or: "On." Cp. Isa. 4:5.

6. Or: "fleecy clouds."

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

8. Or, "deserts."

9. Literally, "in His holy habitation."

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from jail, singing with joy! But for rebels there is famine and distress.

7 O God, when You led Your people through the wilderness,

8 The earth trembled and the heavens shook. Mount Sinai quailed before You—the God of Israel.

9, 10 You sent abundant rain upon Your land, O God, to refresh it in its weariness! There Your people lived, for You gave them this home when they were destitute.

11, 12, 13 The Lord speaks. The enemy flees. The women at home<sup>1</sup> cry out the happy news: "The armies that came to destroy us have fled!" Now all the women of Israel are dividing the booty. See them sparkle with jewels of silver and gold, covered all over as wings cover doves!

14 God scattered their enemies like snowflakes melting in the forests of Zalmon.

15, 16 O mighty mountains in Bashan! O splendid many-peaked ranges! Well may you look with envy at Mount Zion, the mount where God has chosen to live forever.

17 Surrounded by unnumbered chariots, the Lord moves on from Mount Sinai and comes to His holy temple high upon Mount Zion.

18 He ascends the heights, leading many captives in His train. He receives gifts for<sup>2</sup> men, even those who once were rebels. God will live among us here.

19 What a glorious Lord! He who daily bears our burdens also gives us our salvation!

20 He frees us! He rescues us from death.

21 But He will crush His enemies, for they refuse to leave their guilty, stubborn ways.

22 The Lord says, "Come," to all His people's enemies;<sup>3</sup> they are hiding on Mount Hermon's highest slopes and deep within the sea!

23 His people must destroy them. Cover your feet with their blood; dogs will eat them.

24 The procession of God my King moves onward to the sanctuary—

25 Singers in front, musicians behind, girls playing the timbrels in between.

1. Literally, "among the sheepfolds."

2. Implied from Ephesians 4:8.

3. Literally, "I will bring back from Bashan."

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26 Let all the people of Israel praise the Lord, who is Israel's fountain.

27 The little tribe of Benjamin leads the way. The princes and elders of Judah, and the princes of Zebulun and Naphtali are right behind.<sup>1</sup>

28 Summon Your might; display Your strength, O God, for You have done such mighty things for us.

29 The kings of the earth are bringing their gifts to Your temple in Jerusalem.

30 Rebuke our enemies, O Lord. Bring them—submissive, tax in hand.<sup>2</sup> Scatter all who delight in war.

31 Egypt will send gifts of precious metals. Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God in adoration.

32 Sing to the Lord, O kingdoms of the earth—sing praises to the Lord.

33 To Him who rides upon the ancient heavens, whose mighty voice thunders from the sky.

34 Power belongs to God! His majesty shines down on Israel; His strength is mighty in the heavens.

35 What awe we feel, kneeling here before Him in the sanctuary. The God of Israel gives strength and mighty power to His people. Blessed be God!

## EXPOSITION

The interpretation of this magnificent psalm is beset with difficulty; owing in part to its highly dramatic character, and in part to its subtle allusions to ancient history and song. Neither time nor space permits of even a statement of the differences of opinion to which it has given rise among expositors. The only thing which can here be attempted, is, if possible, to do something towards reducing those differences by earnestly endeavouring to hold fast to sound principles of exegesis, and by paying due regard to correct readings and renderings.

The first thing to be sought is the scope of the psalm as a whole: what is this theme? what its keynote? To set this forth has already been aimed at by the "Descriptive Title": "Glimpses of the visible reign of Jehovah over Israel and the Nations." That the reign is that of Jehovah, no one can doubt. That his

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "Everyone submitting himself with pieces of silver." An alternate rendering of verse 30 could be, "Trample upon those who lust after the tribute of smaller nations, and who delight in aggressive wars."

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reign is first over Israel and then over the kingdoms of the earth, is plainly evident when the whole psalm is connectedly read. That the reign at first appears to be a visible dominion, will not be denied—so long as Israel only is taken into account. It is only when *the kingdoms of the earth* outside Israel come into view that the applicability of the term “visible” is likely to be questioned. It is therefore at once submitted, that only by the extension of the idea of visibility or *open manifestation* to the whole psalm, is consistency preserved and the entire trend of Prophecy duly regarded. Under this Divine Reign, there are *kingdoms*, recognised as such: in the Ecclesia of the Messiah, in other words in the Church of Jesus Christ, there are no kingdoms. In this psalm from first to last, Israel stands out peerlessly distinct from the other kingdoms of the earth: in the Church of the New Testament this distinction disappears. *Therefore* the Kingdom here is *not the Church*; and the essential idea intended to be conveyed by the qualifying term “visible” or “manifest” is seen to be needed to preserve the unity of the psalm. Only thus can the several seemingly disconnected glimpses afforded by this psalm be brought into relation as an organic whole. This conclusion, it is believed, will be found well sustained by a rapid survey of the seven divisions into which the psalm naturally falls.

DIVISION I.—As soon as the unity of the psalm is perceived, the dominate note of its first division is heard. The idea is not formally stated, but is incidentally—because dramatically—conveyed. It is helped out in clearness by a very slight modification of the language of Num. 10:35, out of which its first couplet is framed. The words of Moses are a prayer—“Arise, O Jehovah.” The words of the psalmist are either a prediction—“God will arise;” or, more probably, a generalised statement of fact—“God ariseth”: as much as to say—“When God ariseth, then are his foes scattered.” Who then is he whose mere *arising* disperses his enemies? The answer fills vers. 1-3: behold then his prowess! But note also his mercy, hidden behind his majesty: God is love, and, even in the Old Testament, this cannot be concealed. Therefore must come into view the mighty movement of tenderness which prompts God to arise and scatter his foes, the oppressors of his people. *In Yah=Jehovah=The Becoming One=consisteth his name.* Therefore must he become—the father of the fatherless, the advocate of the widow: a song to be sung,



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only with deep emotion by a people in *prisons* and in *exile*; and yet with searchings of heart, seeing that *the stubborn* may be left, for further chastening, *in a sun-burnt land*. Thus simply, yet broadly and grandly, is Israel's King portrayed. His character gives character to his reign. Here the whole psalm rests on stable foundations. No matter what *desert plains* may lie between Israel and her own land, here is a psalm fitted for the banished ones to sing.

DIVISION II—Visible reign: therefore manifest interposition when needed. It was needed and granted, to bring Israel out of Egypt. When Jehovah *went forth before his people*, in the pillar of cloud and fire, it was the *march* of a Divine Conqueror. Only unbelief hid this at any time from view. The poet sees it all now, and deftly expresses it: by one stroke revealing majesty; and then, by another, depicting tenderness: *Earth quaked, the heavens dripped*, how refreshing must the latter have been in the desert! That is all—all the stanza, all the "Division." But it is enough. Israel's God is no mere tribal Deity; but the Lord of earth and heaven. Creation subserves Redemption. The Unseen knows how to make his presence seen.

DIVISION III—The mention of an occasional *dripping* in the desert, suggests an even more essential dripping: the ever-recurring showers in the land to which the people came. This was Jehovah's *inheritance*, which, for needed discipline, was occasionally *exhausted* by drought, and was then *restored* by *copious rains* to its accustomed fruitfulness: the inheritance *wherein dwelt a living host* of animals and men, for all of whom *provideth* in his *bounty* Israel's God. Thus *provideth* he for the *humbled* people, once a family of slaves. The God of Redemption and Creation is also the God of providence.

DIVISION IV.—Here we must pick our path with care. It cannot perhaps be dogmatically determined whether the *original* "conquest" under Joshua here comes into view, or whether a *re-conquest* of a portion of it as under Deborah and Barak, may not be intended. The allusions to Deborah's song (Judges 5) are fairly evident; and it is possible that one such incident may stand for all similar interpositions. Still, the opinion may be hazarded that, while some of the language is taken from the song of the prophetess, it is here generalised to suit the entire conception of both conquering and re-conquering the land of Israel's inheritance. This conclusion is favoured by the turn given to ver. 13, which no longer seems framed to apply as a

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well-merited reproach to home-loving cowards like Reuben (Judges 5:16), but rather to be intended as a simple congratulation on the abundance of spoil falling to the lot of the gentle "dove" of Israel when her enemies disappear before the manifested presence of her God. However this may be, and it is wise not to magnify the difficulty of following the allusion—the chief point evidently is, that success, whether in conquest or reconquest, depends upon the commanding *word of the Sovereign Lord* of the land. When he *gives the word* ("maketh the summons resound"), whether the mandate be regarded as past, present, or future, then decisive results follow: *herald bands*—probably not *women* as some venturously interpret, seeing that the word for *herald band* both here and in Isa. 40:9 may be feminine merely as a linguistic matter of course, and especially seeing that this very passage appears to give the hint that, in war, the place for woman is to *stay at home*—the *heralds*, whoever they may be, convey the King's word to his ready hosts; concerning whom it may be "taken as read" that they make their onset, but that victory so speedily follows that the next thing to be actually noted is, concerning the opposing *Kings*, that *they flee—flee!* Joshua's conquests were rapid; and there may lie concealed in the future flights more rapid still. The Almighty—if we hearken to prophecy—has not yet made an end of *scattering Kings therein*. The reference to the *falling of snow in Zalmon* is probably merely a proverbial way of depicting the fate of the hapless kings so scattered.

DIVISION V.—It would be uncandid not to admit some difficulty here respecting the original text. The Sep. shows a considerable divergence from the Massoretic Hebrew; and Dr. Briggs, in his own drastic way, has reconstructed the two stanzas of which this Division is constituted, so as to show a rather wide departure from what is familiar to us in this part of the psalm. The best way will be to give Dr. Briggs' result intact; and then say why we hesitate to follow him implicitly, and to point out how valuable a remainder survives criticism. Vers. 15-18, as revised and abbreviated by Dr. Briggs, appear thus:—

O mount of Yahweh, fertile mountain!  
 O mount of summits, fertile mountain!  
 Mount Yahweh desired for his throne!  
 Yahweh thou didst ride in thy chariot from Sinai  
 into the sanctuary.

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Thou didst ascend up on high. Thou didst lead  
captives captive.

Thou didst accept gifts, to dwell among mankind.

In the first place, we are predisposed to admit that in many places where Dr. Briggs substitutes "Yahweh" for "Elohim" in this Elohist Book (Psa. 42-47) he is right; and that doubts as to particular passages become mere questions of detail, since no one denies that *both* Divine names *may* in many instances appear side by side. This matter affects the present passage thus: that whereas *mountain of Elohim* may mean no more than *mighty mountain*, *mountain of Yehweh* would naturally apply solely, in this connection, to Mount Zion. Now, since the Sep. goes on to speak of the mountain in question as "fertile mountain," as in Dr. Briggs' rendering above,—it is impossible not to feel that the ancient translators may have read, in their Hebrew exemplar, D SH N, "fertile," where we now read B SH N, "Bashan." To that extent there is legitimate room to doubt what was the true, most ancient text. In the second place, to other of Dr. Briggs' changes, we can only say—That as he goes behind all known texts and resorts to conjecture, we must reserve our consent till we see more difficulty than we do at present in the M.T. as needfully emended in a word or two. In the third place, it is especially satisfactory to find Dr. Briggs practically confirming Dr. Ginsburg's conclusion in favour of the beautiful and significant phrase *From Sinai into the sanctuary*—of which anon: most of all satisfactory is it to discover that the great *ascension* passage is left in substance intact, including in it such helpful accuracies as *captives* for "captivity," and the dwelling among *mankind* as the great object of the ascension—though, to that result, we come by a different route, which enables us to retain the clause *yea even the stubborn* ("rebellious") with a grip which nothing can at present induce us to relinquish. These explanations made, we attempt a brief survey of the passage.

The essential thing contained in the earlier part of it is, Jehovah's choice of Jerusalem as his fixed abode. The unquestioned clearness with which this is asserted, and the concurrence of O.T. testimony confirming it, may well make us chary of admitting that the present lapsed condition of Jerusalem is more than temporary. Nevertheless, we shall be well advised if we open our eyes to the magnitude of the Divine movement which is expressed in the solid line, *The Sovereign Lord hath come*

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from *Sinai into the sanctuary*. That he came escorted by *myriads* of angelic *chariots* may safely remain in the background; not, indeed, as in anywise incredible, but as not elsewhere distinctly asserted, and as in any case a generalised expression of a journey from Sinai to Zion which certainly did not *at once* take place, seeing that it was centuries after the entry into the land that the hill of Zion was captured. But the transition of the Divine Manifestation from Sinai into the sanctuary remains unquestioned; appealing strongly to what may be called the theological imagination, as a crystallised expression of a profound truth:—Sinai, the dark mountain of thunder and terror and law; Zion, the sunny mount of grace and praise. They are, indeed, in line with each other in historical continuity; but, in other ways, they are almost at opposite poles of Divine O.T. Manifestation. At the one end, Angel hosts: at the other, Levitical choirs. At the outset, Moses trembling in fear; at the close, David with his harp in an ecstasy of adoration and praise. It is true that *Sinai came into the sanctuary*, and that, accordingly, the Dispensation remained that of Sinai still; and further true that, to the last, Jerusalem, Hagar-like, was and is “in bondage with her children.” The “grace” and the “truth” did not and could not come by Moses. Nevertheless, Moses became witness to a grace he did not himself minister; and Jerusalem, with its Davidic ministry of praise, had given to it the function not only of pointing back to Sinai, but of pointing onward and upward to its heavenly counterpart; so that, indeed, the towers and palaces and temple of Jerusalem are ever pointing to the sky; and Jehovah’s home below becomes the counterpart of his home above; as in this very psalm, before we are well aware of it, we behold Jehovah *riding upon the ancient heaven of heaven*; and seem ourselves, in his strength, to mount up to *the fleecy clouds*.

Suddenly, however, we are brought back to earth, to recognize that we are slowly learning by types. *Thou* (O God, O Sovereign Lord—where note the abrupt direct address, *Thou*) *hast ascended on high*. In the first instance the language, as all admit, is used of the ascent of the ark to its resting place in Jerusalem, at which point Ps. 15, 24, and in some measure 47, come into line, comparison with which renders needless further comment here. But the very next clause—*hast captured a body of captives*—once more usefully revives the whole question of prophetic typology, or typological prediction. Expression has

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already been given, in the Exposition of Psa. 2, 24 and 45, to the conviction that types should be regarded as hints rather than programmes—as pencilled sketches rather than architect's plans; so that we never need conclude that, because a certain future is feeble in the type, therefore it must have either a small place or no place at all in the antitype. It is of the essence of types that they should be comparatively feeble. What, indeed, was the ascent of the ark up to Jerusalem, compared with the ascent of the Messiah into heaven? Therefore would it seem to be little better than trifling to ask, with any anxiety, whether David or Joab seized a "body of captives" when the ark was carried up the hill, or whether the captives presumably taken when Jebus was captured, were in evidence, as the spoils of a conqueror, when the ascent was made. It is surely abundantly sufficient that the ark was triumphantly carried up into its destined place in spite of all the difficulties that had to be surmounted: the custom of conquerors may answer for the rest. It is customary with conquerors to *capture a body of captives*; customary, for them to *accept presents consisting of men, yea even the stubborn*. And therefore, the very feebleness of any known facts that happened in David's day to fill out the language of the psalm at this point, may well make us conclude that something far transcending the type is here forthshadowed. Hence we turn with relief to the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4, and discover with delight how wonderfully well the great facts connected with the Messiah's ascension to the right hand of God in heaven, do something more than justice to the comprehensive language used in the psalm: "more than justice," in that the verbal departure of the apostle from the psalmist at a single point melts away into higher harmony when set in the light of the great fulfilling facts. The Messiah both received *gifts consisting of men*—his Apostles, his Church, all mankind—and, in turn, gave gifts to men, which gifts themselves were men, namely apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers! Critics truly affirm that the Hebrew itself cannot mean "gave gifts to men"; but it is submitted that all of them should have done what some have done; and, instead of being content with the phrase: "among men"—which leaves it very questionable what to do with the *rebellious* or *stubborn*—seeing that it is not very likely that Yah Elohim would "dwell" peacefully "*among them*,"—should have gone just the one step further, —on the strength of the *beth-essential*, as it is called, which is

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well exemplified in ver. 4 of this very psalm,—by saying, here, *gifts consisting of men, yea even the stubborn*; especially considering how clear and solemn a N.T. truth it is that “the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22), and that Jesus “died and lived again that he might be lord of both dead and living” (Rom. 14:9). Surely, right thoroughly does the New Testament pledge itself to fill the Old Testament to the full, seeing that it can suggest how really and grandly the Messiah, out of “the wicked spirits” darkening the lower “heavenly places” (Eph. 6), *captured a body of captives* when on his way to the central throne to *accept gifts consisting of men*, so “spoiling principalities and powers” (Col. 2) in demonstration of what more in that direction he will yet achieve when the time shall arrive for him to make his great and warlike descent into this lower sphere, and so further prepare the way for the final consummation, when “the tent of God” shall permanently “be with men.”

DIVISION VI.—If the reader will accept these Divisional summaries, not as exhaustive descriptions of contents, but as interpretive hints of special features, helping out the main theme of the psalm, it will be found that the point here made plain is, WHAT PEOPLE it is which, here and elsewhere through the psalm, comes into peculiarly close relationship to God: *carrieth a load for US—OUR salvation—is for US a God of saving deeds*. It is by taking into account in their entirety *all* the characteristics of this people, that we arrive at anything like certainty as to that people’s identity. All worshippers of the one true and living God—all saints among the Gentiles—all members of Christian churches the world over—may not unnaturally deem themselves to be included, so long as the Divine bearing of *daily burdens* and *salvation* itself are the benefits which come into view as calling forth praise; but, when it comes to *bathing thy foot in blood*, it becomes a question as to whether we had not better hark back, and reopen the inquiry as to *the people intended*. Surely, better leave it to the Twelve-tribed Nation, to sit for the portrait, as the people intended by the *we* and the *our* and the *us* throughout the psalm; than to throw the whole psalm into confusion, by overlooking the fact that *Gentiles also* are found here in their own right, so far as description is concerned: *kings, messengers out of Egypt, Ethiopians, Kingdoms of the earth*, are surely comprehensive enough designations to do ample justice to all Non-Israelites.

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In view of other prophecies, especially those which touch on the great biblical question of the bringing of life and incorruption to light, perhaps the line in this division of the psalm which most strongly attracts us is that which says: *And to Jehovah Sovereign Lord belong escapes in view of death.* Here, as in so many cases, translation and interpretation reciprocally serve each other: the right rendering helps out the true exegesis; and, *vice versa*. Until we are satisfied that we have seized the true exegesis, we cannot be quite sure that we have hit upon the happy rendering. *Escapes in view of death.* More literal than *escapes* is *outgoings*, and various "outgoings" are conceivable; "sallies," "outlets," "issues" or "results" each being worthy of a moment's thought. Indeed, had the Hebrew phrase been quite literally, "the outgoings of death," we might have thought of DEATH'S OWN EXITS, his departures from first one sphere and then another of his former dominion; so that first the Messiah dieth no more, then the Church dieth no more, until at length Death itself is swallowed up in victory. But probably this would in any case have been too great a stride to suppose here taken by the revealing Spirit, whose disclosures ordinarily advance by gently graduated degrees. Hence, and the Hebrew being literally as peculiar as it is, and the English phrase "escapes in view of death" being as striking and satisfying as it is, probably we shall be doing wisely to content ourselves with its obvious suggestions. The moment we do this, we bethink us of the numberless "escapes in view of death" which David himself had experienced; of the one marvellous "escape" of Hezekiah "in view of death;" then, rising to the level of national outlook, we recall the "escape in view of death" granted by the passage through the Red Sea; the resuscitation of the nation by deliverance from captivity; and realise how ample were the reasons for the insertion of such a line as this in such an ode, and how mighty is the impulse of devout thankfulness to attribute all such "escapes in view of death" to *Jehovah Sovereign Lord*. After submitting all which, it is difficult not to feel that even this rich line of things scarcely fills up the passage;—which apprehension, however, is partly due to the immediately succeeding lines, which, to say the least, countenance the surmise of a two-fold allusion; namely one to Jehovah's enemies, as well as one to his friends. In other words, vers. 21-23 suggest an enlarged application of the previous words, so far as this: "To Jehovah, Sovereign Lord, belong escapes in view of death"—which *he grants or withholds* according to his

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holy will; so that neither *by* death nor *from* death can his enemies escape the visitation of his righteous wrath. This extension of the sense will appear the more called for the more we find in Amos 9:1-4 a parallel to vers. 21, 22 of this psalm. The decisive force of ver. 23 in determining who are the *us* and the *we* of the psalm has already been indicated.

DIVISION VII.—It seems possible and convenient to comprehend all the remainder of this psalm under the one compound division-line placed at its head. *The goings of God . . . into the sanctuary* are pretty clearly pictured as “a procession,” or, still more probably, as “processions”: the whole being uplifted into the realm of the ideal, so as to comprehend not only an allusion to the original bringing up of the ark by David, and the repeated bringings home of the ark after it had gone out before the hosts of Israel to battle (2 Sam. 11:11) but also any procession which the future may have in store. Whether, in ver. 25a, we should read with some authorities *sharim*, “singers,” or with others *sarim* “princes,” is a nice question, which perhaps cannot be dogmatically decided: the verses following (especially ver 27) perhaps favour “princes;” and the more readily, when two things are considered—first, that procession without “princes” would be very incomplete; and, second, that a procession with “princes” leading the way, would even then not be without “singers,”—that is to say, if we may gather from Rev. 15:2-4 that *harpers* need not be tongue-tied, but may sing as well as play.

It seems quite fitting that the psalmist should, in ver. 26a, address the processionists in anticipation of the *assemblies* which they are about to form in the temple courts; and further that (in ver. 26b) he should synonymously term those “assemblies” *the elect of Israel*—to appropriate the word which Ginsburg decides should stand in the text; and which prepares us to find an *elect* group of *tribes* in ver. 27—probably as representatives of the whole twelve-tribed nation: before leaving which we may ask, without assuming that David himself wrote this part of the psalm, Who so likely as David to have set *Benjamin* at the head of the group? That David—partly out of his old habit of reverence for Saul and partly out of his love for Jonathan—should have done it is conceivable. No later singer would have been likely to indulge in such a stroke of antiquated chivalry.

From this point onward for some way in the psalm, there is little that demands comment: save, perhaps, chiefly, to note how admirable a parallel with ver. 28b is found in Isa. 26:12; to



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observe that by *the beasts of the reeds* we are, by general consent, to understand the "hippopotamus" as the symbol of Egypt, in which case the *mighty oxen* which follow would naturally suggest the monarchs of Assyria and Babylon, and thus prepare us to favour Dr. Briggs' emendation of 30c, remembering how repeatedly, between West and East, Israel was trampled in the mire.

After the direct address to God—*Command, Rebuke, Scatter* (ver. 23-31)—which may itself form part of the song which the processionists sing; we come upon the exhilarating climax of the entire psalm, in which (as it would appear) Israel in her gladness invites the outlying nations to join her in praise: a climax which is indeed exhilarating, by reason of the comprehensive vision it gives of earth and heaven united, and the frank and grateful strains in which we hear the nations themselves recognising that the God of the heavens is the God of Israel: *He rideth on the ancient heavens of heavens, yet over Israel is his majesty; His strength is in the skies, yet the God of Israel it is who giveth strength and abundant might to the people.* It is this very blending of earth and heaven, of the past and the future, which for once induces a slight uncertainty as to which *sanctuary* is intended in the last verse of the psalm. If we felt bound to restrict the outlook of ver. 35 to that of vers. 17, 24, we should decide for the earthly sanctuary; but, perceiving as we do the delightful way in which, here at the close, the vision of the psalmist seems to alternate and vibrate between earth and heaven with a general uplifting effect, we are disposed to leave this nice point for the event of fulfilment to determine. It is probably more important to note that, whether the Divine Manifestation intended be made from the heavenly sanctuary or the earthly, there will be in it a sufficiently marked element of terror to render it *fear-inspiring*. So far—no further as yet—does the vision reach. Nevertheless, coupling the end of the psalm with its beginning, and noting well the promising transition from Sinai to Zion in the centre of this magnificent composition, we can be well content to rest in the final note—*Blessed be God!* and can felicitate ISRAEL that, under the leadership of such men as David, Hezekiah and undoubtedly Isaiah, such strains as these were in the earlier centuries of the Monarchy prepared for the celebration of the "lily" feast at the beginning of the year, that is, for the Passover; according to Dr. Thirtle's principle for the re-adjustment of the musical inscriptions. "Undoubtedly Isaiah" may be thought to be going beyond the evidence; but after

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the weighty arguments for attributing the authorship of Isaiah 40-66 to the known Isaiah of Hezekiah's day, which have been advanced by Dr. Thirtle, in his "Old Testament Problems," it may soon be open to us to turn the tables upon Kirkpatrick, for example (who infers the late date of this psalm from its numerous resemblances to "Isaiah II."), by contending that, on the contrary, those very resemblances go far to prove that the closing chapters of Isaiah as well as the psalm were written early enough to justify the librarian's mark inscribing even this psalm *to (or by) David*: from whom we may well believe its fundamental strains actually came. That Hezekiah probably added to it and adapted it to temple worship, does not really throw doubt on the traditional heading; any more than does an addition or two by an exilic editor, who may, for example, easily have supplement Division I. by the line, *Howbeit the stubborn remain in a sunburnt land*. Even this supposition, however, is by no means necessary to the assumption of the Davidic authorship and the Hezekian co-authorship, seeing that extensive deportations to sunburnt eastern lands had already taken place in Hezekiah's day.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Perhaps the best we can do for discussion would be to reproduce the brief comments and somewhat extended outline of W. Graham Scroggie: "The Psalm has been called 'the grandest and most elaborate of all the Dedication Odes,' and "one of the masterpieces of the world's lyrics"; and Maclaren says: "This superb hymn is unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in grandeur, lyric fire, and sustained rush of triumphant praise."

The main subject is, THE VICTORY OF GOD.

In stanza 1, is sung GOD'S VICTORIOUS MARCH (1-6). In verses 1-3 is an invocation, God is bidden *arise and scatter His enemies*; and in verses 4-6 is a summons wherein His people are called upon to *prepare His way*. Noteworthy here are (a) the flight and plight of God's enemies (1, 2); (b) the rapturous joy of His people (3, 4); (c) the description of God in his relations (5, 6), in which mark the contrast between the lot of subjects (5, 6a), and of rebels (6b).

In stanza 2, THE WILDERNESS LIFE IS DESCRIBED (7-10). Here is summarized the story of Numbers, *omitting the sins of Israel*. In graphic language is set forth the history of Israel from the Exodus to the Entry into Canaan. The *terror and tenderness*

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of God are prominent; His *power* and His *providence*. "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain" *in the wilderness!* He sends rain where it is needed most.

In stanza 3, THE VICTORIES WHICH WON THE LAND are recounted (11-14). This stanza covers the period of Joshua and the Judges. Here we observe the hurry of battle and the tumult of many voices on the field. Mark the scorn of verse 12, *kings fleeing*, and *women at home* dividing the spoil. When *the Lord speaks* (11), who can resist?

Maclaren has described verses 11-14 as "the despair of commentators," and Perowne says that "it is indeed almost hopeless now to understand the allusions," yet the general drift of the stanza is discernible. It is a picture of "a battle, with the battle left out." It has reasonably been suggested that it is "a fragment of one of those ancient battle-songs, sung by the women after the defeat of the foe." With verse 13 should be read Judg. V. 16, where Deborah upbraids Reuben for cowardice and irresolution, and for preferring the ignoble ease of pastoral life to the glorious dangers of the war of independence:

"Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,  
To hear the pipings for the flocks?"

These verses are extremely difficult to understand; indeed they are among the most difficult in the Psalter.

In stanza 4, THE ENVIABLE LOT OF ZION is depicted (15-18). The battle is won, and the conqueror enters Zion and its Sanctuary (16, 17), there to abide. The lofty peaks of Bashan envy the little mount of Zion (16), for here is the glory of God, and not there. The Conqueror enters not alone, but with a multitude of captives (18), anticipating that day when He ascended, with such a host, a higher Height from which He bestowed gifts on His Church (Eph. IV :8).

The climax of the Psalm is in this stanza. All that precedes has led up to it, and all that follows flows down from it. The Conqueror, the Lord God has reached this Sanctuary.

With this ends the first main division of the Psalm, the historical retrospect, and with the next stanza begins the second division, in which the Conqueror is seen, not in relation to Israel only, but to all peoples (32, 35).

In stanza 5, THE GREAT ALTERNATIVES are presented (19-23). Here are two contrasted pictures. If we behold *God*, we see Him first as *Burden-bearer* (19, R.V.), and *Deliverer* (20); and then

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as a *Warrior* (21), and *Destroyer* (21-23). If we behold the *people*, we see that God's first aspect and action are because they believe, and His second, because they do not. *If He does not bear your burden, you will have to bear your own.* By Him only is escape from death (20).

In stanza 6, THE SONG OF THE SAVED is sung (24-27). In verses 15-18 we learned of the Conqueror's march to the Sanctuary; how we see His redeemed people following Him (24) with songs (25) of praise (26), four tribes being specially mentioned (27). This is a description of a solemn procession of thanksgiving to the Temple. The faithful share in the Lord's triumph: they who follow in the way of the Cross will know at last the joy of the Crown.

In stanza 7, THE PRAYER OF THE PROCESSION is recorded (28-31). Is as Maclaren suggests, "command" be read instead of "hath commanded," in verse 28, it will be seen that these four verses divide into two and two, and that in each pair the first verse is a petition, and the second, an anticipation of the answer. Here *faith* and *hope* alternate; faith in *request*, and hope of *response*; and so read—faith (28), hope (29), faith (30), hope (31). Surely this stanza is Messianic, and looks forward to a day when this dream shall be fulfilled, when indeed "*Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.*"

In stanza 8, is A CALL TO ALL KINGDOMS (32-35). It begins with "*Sing unto God,*" and it ends with, "*Blessed be God*"; and the exhortation rests upon the declaration: Jehovah is *the God of Israel*, and is to become *the God of all the earth* by the acknowledgment of all peoples. He is *strong*: mark the occurrence of "*strength*" four times in these verses; none shall be able ultimately to resist Him (in verse 33 read, "a voice of strength"). The whole Psalm is a pean of praise; it throbs with exultation; in it we hear the roar of battle, melting in the song of triumph. The Lord is the Victor, and His people are the crowned. The great truth and message of this Psalm is that God will be finally triumphant and be universally sovereign, and that is implied which is not plainly declared, that this victory and sovereignty will be realized through Christ. But what in the future shall be true in the experience of a world, may in the present be true in the experience of each of us.

*Thought*: God's enterprise includes all the earth."